

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-33 have been presently canceled and Claims 34-57 have been added by way of this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-11, 13-14, 20-33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Seta (U.S. Pat. No. 6,430,993) in view of Shimizu et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,867,787). Claims 1-11, 13-14, and 20-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Seta (U.S. Pat. No. 6,430,993) and in view of Shimizu (U.S. Pat. No. 6,867,787). Claims 12 and 15-19 were objected to for being dependent from a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Firstly, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 12 and 15-19.

Secondly, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the courtesy of Examiner Nguyen to briefly discuss this case on July 20, 2006 during which time the examiner's willingness to accept new claims, as long as the allowable subject was maintained, was confirmed.

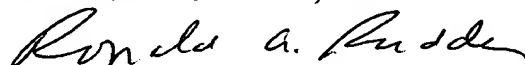
Hence, in an effort to expedite prosecution of the present application to allowance, the present amendment rewrites the objected dependent Claims 12 and 15 as new independent Claims 34 and 48, respectively, and presents these claims in better compliance with U.S. claim drafting practice. The subject matter of original Claims 2-11 and 22-24 has been rewritten as new dependent Claims 35-47, depending from new Claim 34. The subject matter of original Claims 16-24 has been rewritten as new dependent Claims 49-57, depending from new Claim 48.

Accordingly, this amendment is submitted in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.116 which after final rejection permits entering of amendments canceling claims, complying with any requirement of form expressly set forth in a previous Office Action, presenting rejected claims in better form for consideration on appeal, or presenting amendments touching on the merits upon a showing of good and sufficient reasons why the amendment is necessary and was not presented earlier. The present amendment (as noted above) rewrites the objected dependent Claims 12 and 15 as new independent Claims 34 and 48, respectively. No new matter has been added. It is therefore respectfully requested that the present amendment be entered under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 and the claims passed to allowance.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussions, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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